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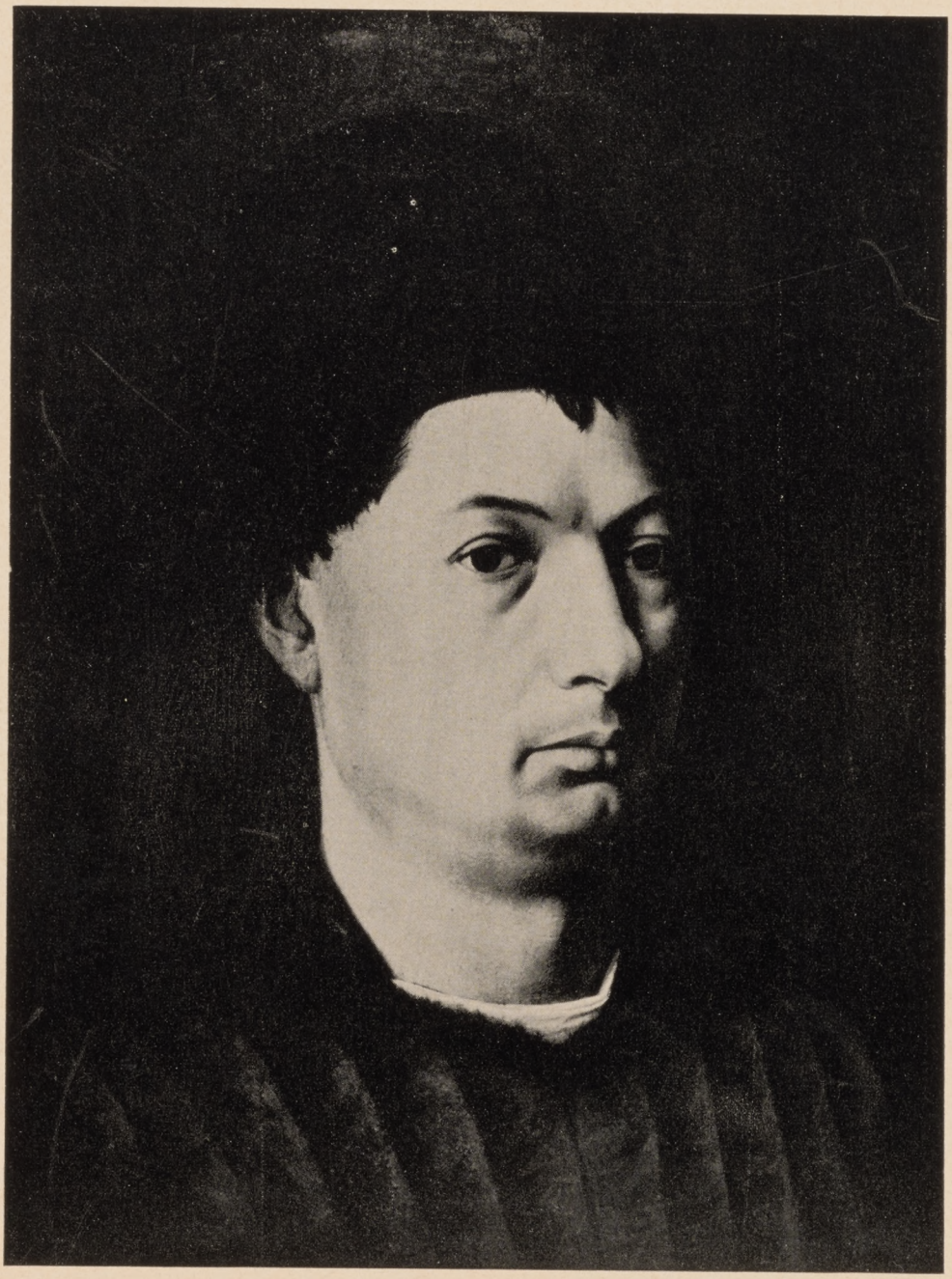

PETRUS CHRISTUS, "Portrait of a Man," *The Balch Collection*

ALBERT BOUTS, "Madonna and Child," *The Balch Collection*

OLD MASTERS IN THE BALCH COLLECTION

By ROLAND McKINNEY

Director of the Los Angeles County Museum

The acquisition of The Balch Collection by the Museum Associates brings to the Museum an ensemble of particular significance. Ranging in scope from ancient glass and pottery to paintings of the old masters, the collection reveals the extraordinary good taste of its founders.

The group of paintings, though small in number, is distinguished by fine quality and the rareness of the artists represented. "Portrait of a Man in a Red Doublet" by Petrus Christus (Flemish, c. 1410-1473), (*plate I*), formerly in the Collection of Sir George Lindsay Holford, is a brilliant example by this rare master. The simplicity of manner effected by Christus recalls the artist's close association with the Van Eycks.

Sir Martin Conway, the authority on Flemish painting, credits Christus as the "only one who has any claim to be considered a pupil of the Van Eycks," a distinction which lends added interest to the study of Christus' work. The artist visited Milan in 1456, where he met Antonello Da Messina. Most authorities agree that Christus exercised considerable influence on Antonello, "whose affinity to the Flemish school," asserts Conway, "is thus fully explained."

"Madonna and Child," by Albert Bouts (Flemish, 1460?-1549), (*plate II*), is in delicate contrast to the bold style of Christus. Albert Bouts, the second son of Dirk Bouts, imitated the paintings of his father, but with his own feeling for color and design. In the Balch panel, Bouts has combined the richly decorative qualities of landscape and figures in a manner suggestive of the poetical approach of the Flemish miniaturists.

Bernard Van Orley (Flemish, 1492-5?-1540), (*plate III*), is represented by "Virgin and Child." This painting, one time given to the School of Geraerd David, demonstrates the admirable talents of this Brussels painter. Orley's work was highly regarded during his lifetime. He was named Court Painter of Brussels in 1518, and was on intimate terms with Albrecht Dürer. Dürer visited him in 1520, and in the following year painted Van Orley's portrait.

The last of the Flemish paintings in the Balch collection, "Virgin and Child with Two Angels," is by The Master of the Saint Ursula Legend (Flemish, active 1470-1495), (*plate IV*). Little is known of this artist. He is described in literature as "The Master of the Saint Ursula Legend" because of his paintings which illustrate the legend of Saint Ursula in the Convent of the Black Sisters at Bruges.

The influence of Hans Memling can be observed in his work, but there is no evidence to prove that The Ursula Master was at any time associated with Memling. His arrange-

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BERNARD VAN ORLEY, "Virgin and Child," *The Balch Collection*

THE MASTER OF THE LEGEND OF ST. URSULA, "Virgin and Child with Two Angels," *The Balch Collection*

GERAERD TERBORCH, "The Card Party," *The Balch Collection*

PIETER DE HOOCH, "Interior with Lady Seated," *The Balch Collection*

BARTOLO DI FREDI, "The Angel of the Annunciation," *The Balch Collection*

BARTOLO DI FREDI, "The Virgin of the Annunciation," *The Balch Collection*

HANS HOLBEIN, THE YOUNGER, "Portrait of a Young Woman," *The Balch Collection*

OLD MASTERS IN THE BALCH COLLECTION

(Continued from page 3)

ments follow the traditional compositions practiced by Memling and others of the conservative Bruges School.

Seventeenth century Dutch painting is represented in "The Card Players" by Geraerd TerBorch (Dutch, 1617-1681), (*plate V*), and in "Interior with Lady Seated," by Pieter De Hooch (Dutch, 1629-c.1683), (*plate VI*). Both canvases exhibit the Dutch painters' predeliction for the native scene and their notably able craftsmanship.

"Portrait of a Young Woman," by Hans Holbein the Younger (German, 1497-1543), (*plate IX*), and two panels by Bartolo Di Fredi (Sienese, 1330-1409/10), "The Angel of the Annunciation," (*plate VII*), and "The Virgin of the Annunciation," (*plate VIII*), complete the catalogue of old masters in the Balch Collection.

The Holbein portrait is a brilliantly executed small roundel in oil on wood, of the artist's last period, painted in England in 1541.

Holbein was highly regarded by Henry the VIII, entering the service of His Majesty as court painter, a position he held until his death in 1543.

Holbein's productions during the approximate ten years he maintained his court office are trenchant characterizations of the men and women who lived during the fabulous reign of Henry the VIII.

Bartolo, one of the lesser Sienese artists of the late Trecento, is known for his decorations in the Church of S. Agostino and in the Communal Palace of San Gimignano.

Emilio Cecchi in his publication, "The Sienese Painters of the Trecento," refers to Bartolo Di Fredi as "among those whose work most clearly recalls the painting of the great epoch of Sienese painting from 1285 to 1348." "These lesser painters," writes Cecchi, "are capable of giving us a genuine aesthetic pleasure and enabling us in addition to trace the course of the stylistic forms which, created during the first decades of the century, lasted right up to the appearance of Sassetta and Giovanni di Paolo."

(This is the first in a series of articles on the Balch Collection)

THE MUSEUM PATRONS' ASSOCIATION

The Museum Patrons' Association was established by the Museum Associates in 1939 as an auxiliary membership organization.

Designed to aid the Associates in obtaining community interest through an active membership, the Patrons have succeeded admirably in fulfilling their charge.

Not only have they registered and held a substantial enrollment during these trying years, but they have contributed their services in many valuable ways to the advancement of the Museum's program.

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THE MUSEUM ASSOCIATES

The acquisition of the Balch Collection by the Museum Associates brings this significant organization into prominence.

Founded in 1938 under the laws of the State of California, as a non-profit corporation for the receipt of gifts and bequests in history, science, and art, the Museum Associates have directed their interests to the development of the Los Angeles County Museum.

By common agreement with the Board of Supervisors of Los Angeles County, the Museum Associates also serve as governors of the Department of History, Science, and Art, thus establishing dual control over the administration of the properties they have deposited in the Museum on indefinite loan.

The Museum Associates have received many notable gifts since their founding in 1938, among the most valuable of which is the recent gift of the Balch Collection. Mr. Balch, who served as the Associates' first chairman, a position he held until his death, wished to endow the corporation with properties which would guarantee its future usefulness.

In 1939, Mr. and Mrs. Balch conveyed title of their art collection to the Museum Associates and, in addition, generously bequeathed a substantial portion of the residue of their estate for the use of the Associates. By this act Mr. and Mrs. Balch established the Museum Associates as a corporate body of distinction, to which others interested in the development of the community's cultural interests might well lend their support.

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Bequests to Museum Associates may be made in money, books, paintings, sculpture, or any other objects of art or in real estate.

In listing the objects and purposes for which Museum Associates was formed, Museum Associates' power to receive and hold property is expressed in Section D of the Articles of Incorporation of Museum Associates, which reads as follows: "to receive property by devise or bequest, subject to the laws regulating the transfer of property by will, and otherwise to acquire and hold all property, real or personal, including shares of stock, bonds, and securities of other corporations."

For the convenience of those desiring to make bequests to Museum Associates, the following form is suggested:

I do hereby give to "Museum Associates," in the City of Los Angeles, a corporation constituted and created under Title XII, Part IV, Division 1, of the Civil Code of the State of California.

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